



Maricopa County

Environmental Services Department



Food Catering Guidance Document

This guide is to assist with permitting a Food Catering Food Establishment and provide details on operational requirements.

Minimum Requirements (Refer to MCEHC Chapter 8, Section 6):**

1. All catering activities shall occur at an approved permitted food establishment; as such, the food establishments shall meet all current code requirements and all advanced preparation (e.g. breeding, chopping, mixing, marinating, etc.) shall take place in this kitchen.
2. Food service will be limited to holding and serving as well as cooking of animal proteins, soy proteins, and vegetables. Onsite reheating and food assembly may be allowed with prior Department approval; as such, the owner/operator should submit written documentation to the Department that details menu and operation.
3. Food products that have been cooked/prepared at the event are to be discarded at the end of each day.
4. All food products requiring temperature control shall be transported and stored in approved equipment (e.g. cambros, hot boxes, cold holding units, etc.).
5. All vehicles carrying food and food products shall be constructed, equipped, and maintained as to protect the purity and wholesomeness of the transported products. Personal vehicles (passenger cars and station wagons, etc.) are prohibited for use with a food catering operation. Note: The Department may accept a rental agreement for a transport vehicle that meets this requirement and provided the approved vehicle is utilized for catering operations.
6. Accessible hand washing facilities shall be located and maintained open at all times. Where suitable facilities (i.e., permanently plumbed hand sinks) are not immediately accessible, a self-contained hand washing station is required.
7. Where offsite food service is to occur outdoors, acceptable booth enclosure for all food activities is required (ceiling and 3 walls as well as flooring that controls dust and mud).
8. All sewage, including liquid waste, shall be emptied into an approved sewage disposal system.
9. All foods offered for customer self-service (i.e., on a buffet or similar means) shall be protected from contamination by the use of packaging, food guards, display cases, or other effective means. In addition, foods that have been offered in this manner shall not be offered for human consumption upon the completion of each day.
10. Linens that do not come in direct contact with food shall be laundered between operations if they become wet, sticky, or visibly soiled.
11. An operating schedule must be provided to the Department upon request. This schedule should include dates and times of events and dates and times when food preparation will occur at the permitted food establishment.
12. All caterers operating from a shared facility must maintain a log of visits to the commissary in the manner prescribed by this Department. This log shall be signed off by the person in charge of the commissary or their designee. This log shall be maintained at the operating location at all times.

Things to Know:

During the plan review inspection, to qualify for a permit, the inspector will be assessing the following:

- a. The menu with information on any activities that will take place offsite (i.e., offsite grilling, assembly of foods, etc.). In addition, information on the number of meals planned to be served.

Note: The inspector will assess if there is sufficient equipment in the kitchen to store/hold all of the food and equipment and whether the kitchen can accommodate the number of meals planned to be prepared. Any changes to the operation, including menu/meals being served, shall be reported to the Department.

- b. Does the kitchen meet current code requirements and does the kitchen have the equipment and space necessary for your operation?
- c. Where will catering be taking place (i.e., event venues where there are permanent hand wash facilities, farmers markets, swap meets, special events, etc.)?

Note: If operating at a special event, farmers market, swap meet, or other location where there is no immediately accessible permanently plumbed hand sink, a self-contained hand sink will be required for permit approval. A self-contained hand sink is a portable hand washing station which includes the following: a 9X9X5 hand sink, 5 gallon potable water tank, 15% greater capacity waste water tank, hot and cold water (a heating element is required), and a minimum flow rate of ½ gallon per minute.



- d. What equipment will be used to transport food safely (i.e., cambros, coolers, hot boxes, chaffing dishes, etc.)?



Note: Inspector will be inspecting this equipment to ensure it is functioning and is in good condition.

- e. What vehicle will be used to transport all food and equipment (i.e., hand sinks, cambros, food items, coolers, etc.)?



Note: The vehicle shall not be a personal vehicle, shall be in good condition, and should be sufficient in size to accommodate all equipment as well as food. The inspector will be inspecting the vehicle and if the vehicle is not present on site, the inspector will look for a rental agreement with a vehicle rental company that we can maintain on file.

Additional Examples of Equipment for Food Catering Food Establishment:



**Maricopa County Environmental Health Code

Please contact the Plan Review Program with questions at 602.506.6980.



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